



*empathy*

**EMPATHY REVOLUTION  
TOOLKIT**

# Index

<b>0. Foreword from the coordinator</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction to the toolkit</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. The importance of the Empathy Revolution</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The project was grounded on a throughout methodology and methodological aspects of the project include:</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Agents of Change Best Practices and Lessons Learnt</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction	9
Pro Arbeit - Germany	9
Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain	10
Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania	11
Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy	12
<b>5. Orientation Best Practices and Lessons Learnt</b>	<b>13</b>
Introduction	13
Pro Arbeit - Germany	13
Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain	14
Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania	14
Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy	15
<b>6. Integration Best Practices and Lessons Learnt</b>	<b>16</b>
Introduction	16
Pro Arbeit - Germany	16
Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain	17
Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania	17
Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy	18
The International Academy	19
<b>7. Inclusion Best practice and Lesson Learnt</b>	<b>20</b>
Introduction	20
Pro Arbeit - Germany	20
Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain	21

Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania	22
Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy	22
<b>8. Campaigning</b>	24
Introduction and Best practices	24
Lessons learnt	24
<b>9. External Advisory Board experiences and recommendations</b>	26
<b>10. Conclusions</b>	28



## 0. Foreword from the coordinator

Europe in the recent past has witnessed an increase in covert racism, resulting in the exploitation of this situation by especially Far-right movements and populists to spread negative attitudes about existential and ontological threats to incite the exclusion and discrimination of unwanted 'others', such as refugees, homosexuals, etc. (Kinnvall, 2017). Figures emanating from the shadow report 'Racism and Discrimination in employment in Europe', by the European Network against Racism and the Eurobarometer indicate that, there are various aspects of discrimination still prevalent throughout Europe. It is against this background that the Empathy (Empowering Migrants Promoting Inclusion via Capacity Building and Communities Engagement) project aims to counter these tendencies and foster a society free of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination.

EMPATHY through its Partners (Pro Arbeit, Germany; Fondazione Empatia Milano, Italy; Project School, Italy; Brasov's Migrant Integration Center, Romania and Association Babelia, Spain), activities and other actors supports the prevention of instances and attitudes of racism, xenophobia and intolerance through the 3 stages - Orientation, Integration and Inclusion - of the project's activities and measures based on non-formal education methods. These in the long run will lead to development and spread of empathic attitudes of EU citizens towards diversity in general. The project is spreading the "Empathy Revolution", through a series of offline and online activities focused on stimulating creative, culture and social innovation approaches to foster an environment for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. The development of the empathy toolkit is instrumental for raising awareness on the relevance of the promotion of discourses of tolerance and respect rather than hatred and anger.

The Empathy revolution toolkit is a document that captures and illustrates the main activities that were carried out and the Best Practices employed to spread empathy in our societies, as part of the activities of the Empathy Project funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission. It is replicable and can be used as an instrument available to public and private organizations willing to use the EMPATHY methods and Best practices towards their younger target groups.

*Mohammed Issifu Signature*

## 1. Introduction to the toolkit

The Empathy project was an Erasmus+ KA3 project focusing on Social inclusion and common values that started in January 2021 and ended in December 2022. This pan-European project was led by 5 organisations from Germany, Romania, Spain and Italy.

Empathy stands for “Empowering Migrants Promoting Inclusion via Capacity Building and Communities Engagement”, and it suggests the main activities foreseen by the project in line with the EU value of ‘equal in diversity’ i.e. educational paths for local and migrant young people to enable them to become agents of change in their communities, tackling issues of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination.

On an operational level, this translated into the involvement of almost 80 young people, a board of eight international experts, an orientation and capacity-building programme counting for almost 320 hours internationally and the delivery of 17 pilot actions in four different countries.

The project was divided in three main phases:

### **Orientation**

Developing and transferring knowledge between young people (both migrants and locals) at the local level.

### **Integration**

Designing and delivering training programmes in four different countries and taking part in an international youth academy.

### **Inclusion**

Empowering the ‘Agents of Change’ (the young people selected) to Spread the Empathy Revolution at the different local levels by designing and carrying out initiatives - called pilot actions - in different domains.

The toolkit presents the methods applied, best practices evaluations, lessons learned and policy recommendations gathered during these three phases of the project. It also presents the points of view and recommendations of a pool of international experts who collaborate in the project over the last two years.

The toolkit is designed to allow you -whether you are an NGO or a civil society organisation - to be inspired to either create training and Pilot Actions with young people or to improve your existing practices in the field of migrant inclusion.

## 2. The importance of the Empathy Revolution

The Empathy revolution joins together two often seen as opposite concepts, the Empathy which has a soft connotation, related to the communication and interpersonal abilities and

the “revolution” one often seen as a strong word related to the ideas of unrest and resistance against an existing social formation.

Nonetheless, in every revolution, the human factor is important - and in this sense we - as a consortium - saw how the agents of change were the base of this, as they took on the responsibility of spreading a change of ideas and attitudes voted towards common understanding, dialogue and encounters. In addition, we saw how this was not easy as it assumes that people are ready to face and embrace potential internal conflicts and put the focus on the other person, trying to promote a deep and radical change towards acceptance. Indeed, while we worked during the project the agents of change were kind of fed up with telling their stories, and really wanted people to try and live their experience, using empathy for a positive change in a way that is relatable to other fellow young people, calling them to challenge the status quo and acknowledging the need for a change against ills affecting our society such as racism and discrimination.

Some ideas to carry on this revolution and promote empathy were discussed during the final conference and are summarised here:

- sharing experiences, engaging, promoting dialogue and actively seeking opportunities to meet different people;
- trying always to question ourselves and not giving anything for granted and therefore challenging, sharing and discussing our own prejudices and biases;
- empathizing, understanding but not condoning hate;
- understanding our emotions, expressing them and listening to others even when it is difficult;
- by being open-minded, avoiding judgements and assumptions;
- offering free therapy sessions;
- not forgetting that the world is a big place and that we are not the only humans, religions, cultures etc. that exist.

These suggestions were just a few of the ideas and attitudes our agents of change will spread around as we are sure they will keep the empathy revolution spirit way beyond this project.

### 3. Methodology

The project was grounded on a throughout methodology and methodological aspects of the project include:

#### Research and Information

The selection of best practices developed in WP2 provided a list of successful initiatives that have been delivered by other stakeholders and were of paramount importance for making a good use of past and current projects promoted in the migrants' orientation field. This process was followed by a strong multi-stakeholder approach for delivering local youth integration labs where project's partners, young migrants, young locals, local communities and integration experts enjoyed a co-design process that will cover all project's actions.

### **The co-creation and the generation of co-ownership for the results achieved**

Above all, youth (migrants and locals together) were put at the centre of this process and were able to design the activities and actions they considered more effective and suitable to engage with the local communities they were part of. Those activities aimed to generate innovative solutions that are likely to be applied thanks to the "cross-fertilisation" of ideas between actors.

### **Education and Learning**

#### ***a. The link between: The different knowledge pillars.***

While culture and creativity will represent the overarching and main frame in which the local agents were invited to learn and work together, a focus on communication was meant to increase their capacities to communicate with a high number of people by using a wide range of tools (digital and social media communication, audio-visual materials such as videos/pictures/infographics, offline materials such as posters/leaflets) - that was the main reason behind the campaigning workshops and activities.

Furthermore, involving them in the upscaling of the project was intended to inform them with the possibility of getting alternative sources of funding and citizens' engagement to allow them to make EMPATHY a long-lasting reality. In this sense, the EMPATHY learning opportunities represent a complete tool in the hands of local agents and citizens for spreading the EMPATHY revolution and for keeping it alive after the project's end.

The orientation (WP2), integration (WP3) and inclusion (WP4) programmes, including the delivery of the pilot actions - The project is based on the main assumption that youth migrants' orientation at local level will be more sustainable if coupled with the concept of integration and inclusion. Indeed, EMPATHY intends orientation as a first adaptation to a new local, social and administrative environment, to be followed by integration and inclusion actions aimed to make communities and societies richer and more cohesive. With this vision in mind, all lessons and materials included in the EMPATHY Integration programme (WP3) will respond to a learning-by-doing vision which will always consider the design and delivery of the Pilot Actions (WP4 - Inclusion) as main end-result of the capacity building programme.

***b. Respect the different natures of the local partners which had the responsibility of delivering the EMPATHY's programme at local level,*** namely: FEM for Italy as no-profit foundation exploiting art and culture for promoting social inclusion; Babelia for Spain as NGO providing orientations and guidance to foreigners living in Alicante; Pro Arbeit for Germany as competence and job centre managing orientation and integration programmes for refugees and newly arrived; and Migrant Integration Centre Brasov for Romania as NGO acting in the field of migrant integration offering different type of services.

**c. Make use of the expertise already included in the EMPATHY's partnership**, and more precisely that one of Pro Arbeit in labour market integration, Project School for their knowledge of social projects management techniques which was applied to the design and management of pilot community projects, Babelia and Migrant Integration Centre Brasov for their strong expertise in the field of migration, and FEM for their knowledge of cultural actions taking empathy as the guiding principle.

**d. Engage external trainers and experts (part of the External Advisory Board)** for delivering specific workshops and/or deepening specific topics, acting both as evaluators of the project's activities and inspiring mentors/role models for the local agents of change spreading the EMPATHY revolution in their communities and cities.



## 4. Agents of Change Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

### Introduction

According to JCSH (2011) “effective youth engagement leads to positive outcomes for young people at three levels:

- the Individual level: e.g. increased personal skills, healthy choices, and sense of identity.
- the social level: e.g. stronger positive connections with friends and adults, and a larger support network.
- the system level: e.g. greater civic engagement, policies and programs responsive to the needs of young people, and new creative ways to govern”<sup>1</sup>(p.7).

This is what the project sought to do by promoting meaningful and effective engagement of young people - both locals and migrants - at different levels, experiencing challenges of fluctuability, the necessity of adapting the activities depending on COVID-19 and the possible other commitments of the agents of change involves; nonetheless, project partners also managed to draw on the lessons learnt and identify important best practices that could be of use in terms of youth engagement in many sectors.

### Pro Arbeit - Germany

The participation of young people in the project provides them the right to be heard, develop their potentials and enrich decision making processes in the societies. It also provided them the opportunity to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of change. Their active involvement helps to ensure that planning and design are relevant to the needs and the rights of young men and women. Their participation leads to more effective and accountable program.

The Best practices confirm that young people need access to opportunities that allow them to become socially and civically empowered. When they are empowered, they are better safeguarded and encouraged to participate in decision making, contribute to bringing about the desired changes and take on roles as active citizens who contribute to the development of their societies.

Through the Empathy project, young people are encouraged to participate in the various activities co-designed by themselves, make their own decisions, act on them independently, and translate their actions into the desired outcomes. The young participants through guidance are encouraged to build networks within their communities and beyond (EU levels) and learn how to use these networks for the betterment of their societies.

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<sup>1</sup> JCSH (2011), Youth engagement toolkit, available at [http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/eecd\\_YETOOL\\_E.pdf](http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/eecd_YETOOL_E.pdf) last retrieved 06/12/2022;

In order to stay connected with and maintain the motivation of the project's young participants the following strategies were employed;

- **Make young participants see the need to get involved:** Greater emphasis was placed on the relevance of the project and more especially with regards to the role of the young participants. As agents of Change, participants saw the need to act against the ills of society and change perspectives especially among their peers. This developed a sense of commitment and to the call to action.
- **Encourage Ownership:** As young participants commit themselves to participating in the project, they were encouraged to take ownership of the project, its activities and outcomes. This will not only ensure the success of the project, but also ensure its sustainability in the long run.
- **Keep meetings and activities Interesting:** The desire of young people are important for the success of projects, especially if their participation is voluntary. To ensure their active participation, the empathy project integrated fun activities into the project, such as excursion, cinemas and sports among others. The various workshops and trainings were integrated with aspects that made the process as interesting as possible. This was meant to reduce boredom and maintain interest.
- **Employ flexibility:** Considering that the participation of the young people is voluntary, their time need to be respect, especially because they have other commitment such work, holidays, school, etc. Events and meeting are usually arranged to meet the schedules of the participants. Eg some partners met their participants only on Friday evenings or weekends.
- **Share and delegate responsibilities:** In order to have all on board, develop a sense of ownership and commitment. Responsibilities are often shared among participants. This also developed a sense of belonging and relevance to the group from each person, thereby providing participants the opportunity to contribute

## Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain

After identifying and reviewing the best orientation actions and tools available within our organization and within the consortium of partners, our team created a collection of best practices which were subsequently used to provide guidelines for the development of the orientation program.

The best practices provided by Babelia included initiatives which have proven to be successful and focused on **cross-cultural understanding as a key factor to promote intercultural coexistence and social cohesion**. As a result of Babelia's commitment to multiculturalism and social justice, young locals and migrants who adore learning and creating change were attracted and got on board with the Empathy Project, giving rise to the creation of a group of agents of change who are highly motivated and willing to direct all their efforts to promoting tolerance in their neighborhood.

With this view in mind, we made it our goal to **build mutual trust and foster good relationships between staff, agents of change and EAB members**, the main purpose being that of establishing transparency by sharing information and encouraging all members to

emotionally engage among each other, to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Emanating from the Pangea Project, an initiative offered by the Town Hall of Alicante and carried out by the Association Babelia, the lessons learned aimed at increasing participants' skills for detecting and combating the episodes of hatred, discrimination and intolerance towards migrants and refugees. In particular, the lessons have been structured to emphasize the importance of equipping young people to live in a diverse world by focusing the initiatives on teaching them to value diversity as a way to master the skills and strategies necessary to challenge the attitudes that lead to intolerance. The participants expressed that they enjoyed interacting with peers and trainers and emphasized that taking part in the initiative has been an excellent experience which enables them to act confidently as intercultural mediators and agents of change

## Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania

The fluctuation of the agents of change was anticipated from the first phases of the project. Our center has worked with students as the main target group, thus taking into account the length of the project and their limited stay in the city of Brasov, we have also experienced a fluctuation of the agents of change at local level.

Nonetheless, at least 10 agents of change selected by our organization have been relatively stable and motivated to stay involved as agents of change in the Empathy project. ***What we noticed is that the ones who have remained in the Empathy group have a personal motivation and find a meaning of this group:*** personal as the project offered them new friendships and also professional as they felt they can contribute for the development of the project as a whole.

In terms of staying connected, the majority of the stable agents of change in Brasov have been engaged with our organization before and after the Empathy project started (by participating in other activities on other projects, by volunteering, by being helped by our center in different issues - immigration, medical, school etc). They inherently were engaged with our organization and felt the Empathy project resonated very well with their personal values and can bring their contribution.

Part of the agents of change have established a connection with our center before the project, part of them participated in other activities we have organized and continued to participate by attending events and activities organized in the Empathy project, and part of them joined the project because the other agents of change have spread the word about the Empathy project and they voluntarily joined.

In terms of motivation, all stable agents of change felt a personal motivation to be part of this project. They connected at a personal level with the values promoted by the Empathy project; they felt they could personally contribute to the proposed activities; they felt their presence and words were heard.

## Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy

The agents of change comprised young people, mostly university students (or that had just finished their studies), both with a migratory background and locals. The group thus included university students as since opportunities that the EMPATHY project presented, in order to be well understood and exploited needed a group of young people well alphabetised. EMPATHY in addition made the '**University Corridors**' project undertaken by UNHCR in Italy more visible, as the 'agents of change' initially included foreign students newly arrived in two university poles in Milano (University Milano Statale and Milano-Bicocca), in fact both students who had just arrived in September 2021, or that had arrived the year before under the same project formed. To this initial group a number of foreign students present in these same universities coming from Syria or that participated in particular with the University Milano-Bicocca in a 'mentoring' project for the integration of foreign students in the campus, were added. Furthermore, Fondazione Empatia Milano in order to open up to 'Italian' students, youngsters that live in Milano for more than two years, envisaged various options, such as a public call, and various interlocutions also with the Municipality. And in the end FEM decided to find synergies to implement EMPATHY with a **students' association named LATO B**, which offered its premises to conduct various sessions of the project and participated actively in the activities.

The Agents of Change group grew with a 'sense' of belonging through various activities offered in the various phases of the project (orientation, integration such as co-design, capacity building, and inclusion through the pilot project).

Depending on the free time students had and other engagements especially towards exams etc., the engagement of the group to the EMPATHY project activities fluctuated. However with some participants the connection became very strong.

When deciding how to develop the pilot project, **what the agents of change expressed, was taken into serious consideration and became the real challenge**. Agents of change were listened to and put at the centre. This became very clear to all participants concerning the pilot project which put all theoretical approaches and ideas into practice.



## 5. Orientation Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

### Introduction

The orientation programme differed across all countries, nonetheless each partner sought to use this phase as a first contact point to create a cohesive group of participants interested in the project as well as to provide basic information for newly arrived migrants to navigate across the services of the hosting societies.

In this phase, for each target country (Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain), the project delivered 40 hours of lessons in a time span of 4 months, reaching 20 people on average per each target country, and therefore 80 people in total.

In terms of modalities, the orientation programme included the following features:

- Innovative approach to basic information both live and online;
- Mutual Learning Workshops and peer-to-peer learning activities;
- Non-formal activities where community-building was at the centre;
- Study visits across the cities involved to expand the knowledge of the territory and enrich local networks.

### Pro Arbeit - Germany

The orientation programme for newly arrived migrants was designed and delivered as a first pillar of the project's capacity building actions. It provided the Project's young participants, especially the migrants, with a platform to share their experiences which was aimed at supporting them to develop concrete ideas to improve their social and economic inclusion in their societies. It also created the platform for the newly arrived migrants to meet local young peers to exchange ideas and build networks.

**Strong emphasis were placed on Social Networks** and its relevance to the integration process of the newly arrived and so the social integration best practice from Brasov was adopted to create a feeling of community, build friendships and remove feelings of loneliness and identity loss, help in reducing the different types of stress migrants go through during the migratory and integration processes. This provided the Social network to connect young migrants to other migrants as well as locals to overcome the feelings of loneliness, boredom and other social challenges that migrants are often confronted with in their new societies.

This best Practice has proven to be very useful and effective, especially in building networks among young people. This has successfully brought the young participants in Germany together. Overtime, the initial differences that were evident in the beginning of the project dissipated and this enabled participants to widen their networks and meet each other for other social events outside the project. It also provided an avenue for mutual support among young participants as they supported each other as and when necessary.

## Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain

The Orientation Best Practices were based on an initiative that aimed at responding to the need for promoting the process of integration, adaptation, and inclusion of newly arrived migrants within our community. ***The programme, conceived as a tool to promote equal opportunities, solidarity and social justice, included workshops, capacity building activities and training sessions, providing thus a foundation upon which young migrants could build and acquire the skills necessary to adapt to their new local, social and administrative environment.***

The activities were carried out in facilities designed as spaces of coexistence where newly arrived migrants socialized with young locals by spreading the concept of cultural diversity. It contributed to promoting intercultural tolerance by adopting methodologies based on creative pedagogy and dynamic learning, focusing above all on positive emotions, personal challenges and communication skills. In addition to the ordinary lessons, trips to places of interest and outdoor recreational and cultural activities were carried out. Each lesson included activities based on group dynamics, mass games, audiovisual materials and stage play applied to conflict mediation.

The lessons learned spread across a range of categories including the phenomenon of migration and migration dynamics in Spain; culture and mediation; sources, types of conflict and conflict escalation; the education system in Spain; residence permit and Spanish nationality; labor market regulations, national labor and employment law, and intercultural strategies for managing diversity. The lessons have been learned in a consistent manner and have been transferred effectively between participants in a way that resulted in creating and collecting new knowledge so it can be shared with others; reviewing knowledge to evaluate its relevance; using knowledge to solve problems and, ultimately, sharing knowledge through collaborative activities.

## Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania

The lesson learnt from the Orientation phase was ***the need for consultations with the agents of change regarding the prospective project activities.***

For the Orientation Phase, we have mixed the bottom-up perspective (direct consultations with the agents of change) and the top-down perspective (the organizations and project's possibilities and limitations, the vision and mission of our organization and Empathy project, and the financial possibilities of the project).

We have thus communicated to the agents of change that integration is a two-way process and that integration practices can be build taking in account the input and efforts of the migrants and the input and efforts of the host society. The agents of change, both migrants and Romanians have learned from the first meeting that integration is a two-way process where migrants and the host society must equally contribute to an effective integration and both parties must show empathy in this entire process.

Thus, in the Orientation program, we took into account the agents of change and our center's possibilities to implement them. For many months, the agents of change have been part of a

local orientation program built together with them. Thus, they have participated in Romanian language classes, learned about local traditions, local landmarks, local culture and had opportunities for socialization.

As for sustainability, some agents of change and one expert of the Empathy project have started to replicate and adapt the Orientation program on Ukrainian youth that are now living in the city of Brasov.

## Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy

The orientation activities became the ground through which ***creating the sense of a group, that could work and share experiences together***. The orientation developed in Milano was initially developed as a 'University orientation' and then it became a 'Territorial orientation', a way to get to know the context and the city we all live in.

University orientation took place starting already before some students selected within the University Corridors project arrived in Milano. It was delivered online, it was drafted and shared with the two Universities Milano Statale and Milano Bicocca. It was intended as a 'peer to peer' exchange, and therefore some students were selected as peer tutors, coming from the same areas/faculties in which the foreign students were enrolled and were able to present how the campuses worked, the library, the lessons, give some general information on the courses etc.

The second part of the orientation started as soon as the foreign students arrived in Milano (after their quarantine). An initial group got together to spend some time and it was decided that we could show some interesting cultural spots of the city, with an attention to show how Milano can be 'inclusive', towards foreigners, but also more in general towards vulnerable people.

This phase of getting together was extremely important. It was delivered during the weekends as students were less engaged with lessons, and were often more lonely. And slowly slowly it created a habit of getting to know each other with the aim of broadening reciprocal connections.

## 6. Integration Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

### Introduction

For each country, the project delivered a capacity building programme addressing all local agents of change and focused on exploiting three main words: debate, connect, engage. The programme was delivered through open workshops where both partners' staff and external experts were invited to speak and act as trainers for the participants; it also included peer-to-peer learning occasions and study visits.

For each country, the programme delivered at least 60 hours of lessons in a time span of 6 months. In this phase, co-design was the central tool to make the agents of change feel empowered and sharpe the subsequent inclusion phase.

### Pro Arbeit - Germany

The integration stage of the project witnessed participants taken through workshops and training on topics co-designed by themselves. The topics are therefore different from partner to partner.

- Co-design: The co-design processes gave voice to the young participants and provided the platforms for sharing their experiences and perspectives regarding the issues under discussion, which provided a broader and deeper of their lived experiences as well as perspectives. This enabled them to identify topics that fit the target group and audience.
- Venue: The choice of venue can influence the participation of young people in training sessions. The workshops were organized in several venues and sometimes combined with an exhibition to an excursion. For example, a visit to a former concentration camp followed by a workshop made the process not only interesting but also less abstract and more engaging.
- Avoiding the classroom settings: As indicated before, most young people are students and already familiar with the classroom settings. Any setting like that only reinforces their classroom experiences. As such, the project employed more informal settings such as discussions after a movie, discussions combined with sports, etc. This created another learning atmosphere different from their regular experiences.
- The use of games. One effective way to encourage youth participation in trainings and workshops is by the use of games in sessions. In the case of the Empathy Project, whipping-up participation was at the beginning challenging. Relevant games and icebreakers were used that helped young people to participate and learn.
- The use of everyday narratives. The use of real-life experiences as examples during sessions reduced the abstractness of discussions and developed positive attitudes to sessions as participants felt addressed. These were adopted in for example theatre training, human library training and other workshops among others.
- The international academy and sightseeing activities: The international academy brought all partners and selected young participants from the various project partner



countries together, where participants were taken through various workshops and skills empowerment activities. This was combined with sightseeing activities and network building activities among others. This is very interesting especially for young people and has resulted in the exchange of visits between young participants across partner countries.

## Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain

In accordance with Babelia's line of work, our team took on the task of accompanying our agents to change each step of the way during the delivery of the capacity building programme by attending to their needs and by holding respect and mutual trust at the core of our lessons.

The agents of change have been encouraged to convey their opinion, to be creative, selective and critical and to bring forward ideas and concerns to us in a respectful manner. In order to allow all the agents of change a chance to take an active role throughout the entire process, the option to meet on a weekly basis by joining the sessions both online and offline has been offered. This setup gave us the possibility to learn about the experiences of our agents of change, to work in partnership with them and to communicate with the group in an accessible way which encouraged some of them to express their interest in delivering some of the topics of the integration programme. In particular, they were offered a chance to work on their skills and core competencies creating thus positive results in performance, effective relationships and personal well-being by taking part as trainers in the delivery of the topics related to inclusive communication, non-violence and peace in schools, emotional intelligence, access to linguistic services, art and awareness, public speaking, DIVE (describe-interpret-verify-evaluate) method, anti-racism, interculturality and tolerance and, respectful and peaceful coexistence.

In addition and taking into consideration the educational and cultural background of our agents of change, lectures covering the rest of the topics they were interested in have been offered by engaging experts to deliver the specific and theoretical parts of the integration programme. Namely, it included topics related to access to the healthcare system in Spain, empowering migrant women, institutional racism, migration and voluntary service, social ties and Spanish citizenship, residence permit, training programme for migrants, resources available to migrants and refugees, Spanish as a second language and migratory grief.

## Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania

The integration program has started with two brainstorming sessions regarding integration and capacity building programs: one for the staff and experts of our center and one for the youth. The agents of change have been invited to participate in a brainstorm and consulted about the activities to be organized under the integration program. Together we have co-design and delivered a training program for the agents of change entitled Integration Capacity Building Program. The brainstorming had positive effects for the involvement and motivation of the agents of change. They felt their needs are heard and they are listened. Being able to contribute in a capacity building program increased their motivation to engage in the proposed activities of the pilot project.

These meetings were organized in November 2021 before the Russian invasion in Ukraine. After the 24th of February 2022, our center's activities have included the response for the Ukrainian refugees that have arrived in our city, Brasov. Thus, part of the activities organized in the capacity building program have been organized for the agents of change in direct relation to the Ukraine crisis.

In this sense, the capacity building programme comprised of workshops, presentations, study visits, multidisciplinary trainings on topics such as interculturality, tolerance, gaining new skills, youth solidarity, differences between stereotype - prejudice – discrimination, hate speech and the right to personal dignity; vulnerable groups and hate crimes, gender equality, gender-based violence, non-discrimination of LGBTI persons, human trafficking awareness and replication of activities for young Ukrainians.

Empathy was fundamentally the key concept for the integration capacity building program that we have designed. In this sense, the capacity building program has not been a static one, but it was adapted, adjusted to the local context that the agents of change are a part of.

## Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy

**Co-design was the first phase of the capacity building programme.** Listening to inputs and putting the agents of change at the centre, listening to each participants' desires and ideas, was key to come up with a shared and common work. Furthermore the group needed to get to know each other more in depth, knowing '**Who we are**' as a starting point: where we come from, what we are studying or have studied, what are our interests and dreams etc.

In order to organize the capacity building phase, it was important to collaborate with the young student organization LATO B, which hosted most of our encounters, participated actively and gave a lot of interesting inputs.

**Capacity building started trying to establish and build a shared knowledge of 'empathy'** in theory and in practice. Visiting together a **performative exhibition** run by blind people for example, debating on how **communication (public, political etc.) can be empathic** or instead represents an empathy gap; **empathic listening and conflict mediation**.

While the group started capacity building and co-design activities we assisted at the beginning of the **war against Ukraine**. For people with a migratory background and for some, which were refugees and had escaped war, it becomes clear that entry conditions are not the same for all refugees and foreigners. It became clear that depending on where you come from, which is your nationality, your gender, the color of your skin etc, your passage into Eurpèe can be easy, direct, or instead full of obstacles. This event was thus debated within the group and became an important starting point also for the development of the next phase (inclusion).

The partner Project School was involved in this phase to help develop the pilot project. In particular, capacity building topics that were decided, offered, and that became very useful for further steps included: **project design (why, what and how); project budgeting (and fundraising and crowdfunding)**. Another area of theoretical interest and practice was represented by designing and conducting **qualitative interviewing** for developing the topics of the Pilot project (Corridors).

## The International Academy

The International Academy was a large-scale mobility activity that allows local agents of change, partners' staff, and External Advisory Board experts to meet each other, and exchange knowledge and information regarding the project's activities and outputs. Participants had the opportunity to share ideas on the design and implementation of the inclusion programs to be delivered at the local level, through which the word EMPATHY was promoted and exploited, but also learn from each other and from the experts present.

The Academy was open to the participation of 10 local agents of change per each target country (40 in total), plus 2 partners and 1 expert per country. In total, it will join together around 50 people. The academy was held in Milan, Italy, between the 6th and the 10th of July at the premises of Casa Cardinale Ildefonso Schuster and it was organized by Project School.

It lasted 3 full working days and 2 half-days(6-10 July), including several sessions and different methodologies, among which:

- Pitching the pilot plans previously realized by each group of local agents of change;
- Workshop on campaigning to individuate the key elements that are necessary to sensitize people about practices related to migration, xenophobia, and any type of discrimination.
- Ideathon, intensive brainstorming activities where the ideas, skills, and interests of the local agents converged to prototype the local engagement plans that will be realized in the next steps.
- Study visits to the premises of Emergency (an Italian humanitarian NGO) and the MUDEC - Milan Museum of Culture;
- Walk'n'Talk organized by FEM exploring the city of Milan with empathetic lenses.

The event was also joined by external experts coming from Refugees Welcome, the Radicalisation Awareness Network and Iparticipate.

In addition, moments of fun and collective dinners and a party were part of the schedule as a way to positively reinforce international social networks.

## 7. Inclusion Best practice and Lesson Learnt

### Introduction

The Inclusion was the third phase of the project implementation and was developed from June 2022 to December 2022. The local Agents of Change engaged local communities in the so-called local engagement plan, meaning specific actions delivered at the country level well to spread the Empathy Revolution.

Four plans were realized considering the specific context of implementation, the needs assessed, the partnerships identified, the channels of communication, and the budget needed. In the next pages, each partner will share best practices and lessons learnt from the realization of each initiative.

Another activity, part of the third phase, was the implementation of sensibilization campaigns, in many forms and through different channels, by the local Agents of Change.

Still for this activity best practices and lessons learnt were elaborated.

### Pro Arbeit - Germany

The Project's participants - Agents of change - became very active towards deploying citizens' engagement activities aimed at spreading the impending EMPATHY revolution at local level.

These actions were co-designed by the Agents of Change themselves with guidance from project partners and external stakeholders. This further deepened the young participants sense of the ownership of the project's activities.

Launch Event: In order to reach a wider audience and to launch their Pilot activities, the Agents of Change of all Partners organized big events at their local levels. For instance, the Launch in the County Offenbach in Germany took place in Dietzenbach with close to 100 guests, who were actively involved in the entire day's programme which lasted 4 hours. The event created the platform for the Agents of Change to present to the general public the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they acquired in the project and to also transfer these attitudes and skills to the general and launch the revolution. It was structured to provide audiences the ability to see, hear and discuss incidences of discrimination in their societies. The activities carried-out during the Launch event were;

- A social theatre: This was carried through a theatre play, where Agents of change played roles (after receiving training from professionals - Creative Change) on daily discriminatory incidents against migrants. The audience were actively involved and invited into processes and discussions to address such occurrences in societies.
- A human library: This part of the event invited readers to borrow human beings serving as books and engage in interactions based on the experiences of the human books, based on the themes of the project - prejudice, discrimination, racism, etc. This provided the general public the opportunity to hear stories they would normally not

hear about or at least hear such stories from the victims directly. This whipped up the sense of Empathy from readers of the books.

- A Workshop on Stereotypes: A workshop on stereotypes, how to identify and deal with them was also carried out by the Agents of Change. Closely accompanying this part was the distribution of flyers with valuable information on the themes of the project, prepared by the project's stakeholders such as Anne Frank's Centre, Rote Linie, Pro Asyl, etc. These collaborations did not only provide the Project with information but also expertise, skills and networks, which enabled the project and its partners to progress towards achieving the project goals.

Next Steps: These activities will be replicated in Schools, at various events within the County and beyond on the various themes of the Project to spread empathy. To ensure sustainability, the Agents of Change will maintain the group as an Empathy Youth Association to continue with the project activities even beyond the project's duration. The project's External Advisory Board and other local stakeholders will offer support to the Agents of Change after the project ends.

The general feedback of the launch event in Germany was very positive

## Asociación por la Interculturalidad en Alicante Babelia - Spain

Babelia participated this year in the organization of a big event to mark the World Refugee Day, June 20th, along with the Town Hall of Alicante and other local entities which gave our agents of change the opportunity to have an insight into the preparations of the event as well as a chance to participate in carrying out the activities and goals of the programme. Namely, the pilot actions carried out from 13th to 18th of June to celebrate the World Refugee Day included an opening event, football match 8, gymkhana, intercultural cooking workshop, presentation of the annual report on asylum seekers and a social theatre. The event connected to its audience through a series of activities that enabled our agents of change to act as both viewers and performers, offering authentic and engaging content.

In addition, based on the topics covered during the previous lessons, especially those related to raising awareness about diversity, interculturality, equity and inclusion, the agents of change proposed several activities to be organized and carried out during the piloting in September. Some of the ideas for the pilot actions have been gathered at the activism festival held annually in Alicante, an event at which one group member acted as a performer while staff members and the rest of the agents of change have been in attendance as viewers.

Correspondingly, the team in Alicante had the opportunity to organize and carry out engagement activities aimed at spreading the empathy revolution at the local level by raising awareness about multiculturalism and inclusion. These implementation-related activities designed to test the empathetic approach to migration and to transfer the best practices across cultures took place from 27th to 29th of September 2022 at the opening event of the new academic year at the University of Alicante. It included activities such as music workshop, role play, henna workshop and experiencing emotional reactions to the other person's situation under the empathy umbrella. Moreover, throughout the time, a core group of young locals have become so closely-knitted that they are tossing around the idea of creating a youth

association so that they could develop and implement projects on their own; projects that seek to create a better society; to continue involving its young people, placing in them the trust to improve our future and to encourage them so that diversity could be seen as an asset rather than as a division in this global world. Accordingly, one of the agents of change attended a meeting held on a monthly basis (October) among all the local entities in Alicante as a representative of the future association prior to organizing and carrying out an informative workshop on how to create a youth association (November).

## Migration Integration Centre Braşov - Romania

The 9th edition of the festival has worn the brand of Empathy in order to spread the Empathy Revolution. Together with the agents of change, the staff of the project and the experts have prepared an action plan consisting of different materials and activities to be included in the multicultural festival and promote Empathy.

Media: one local television has created a series of short movies about the concept of empathy and they were released on the local TV station (Radio Televiziunea Transilvania – RTT)

Press Releases: the press release has mentioned the co-funding of the Empathy Project and has been published by local, national and international newspapers.

Live empathy messages: the presenters of the event have talked on the stage about empathy and have spread messages to encourage empathy

Project visibility: the passport, the program of the event, other printed materials – have worn the empathy logo (3000 passports, 500 event programs, over 3000 country postcards), other printed materials

Video spot: promotion video has met 36.6K views

Written messages: postcards, bookmarks, calendars with classic empathy messages have been given out for free to the visitors at the event,

Take Empathy with you: the Empathy stamp was created – to be used on the signature element of our event – The Multicultural Passport

Conversations: conversations with visitors about empathy have been led by the agents of change and the experts

## Fondazione Empatia Milano - Italy

The agents of change decided that they would have liked to have their peers know more about the 'University corridors' project, not just by explaining it during a seminar, a conference etc, but by having people 'live' their feelings, emotions, frustrations, successes, ideas, obstacles, curiosities, strengths. In general the agents of change wanted their peers to know more about their life through empathy.

Once the 'audience'/public was clear: peer university students, the initial idea was to somehow use the space of the 'corridor', as a symbolic and interesting space of passage,

where you encounter but not necessarily get to know people, using this space as a metaphor for a trip, that can bring you somewhere or not, where you meet people, but you don't really know them.

The whole idea for developing a local engagement plan and the pilot action was really a joint work, developed during various meetings. The group started thinking to develop a sort of 'experiential' game, where participants could **meet, and live, through their stories, foreign students who live in Milano, interviewed by Fondazione Empatia Milano**. Once this idea became clear, it was key to engage in this path an architect, that had already developed a similar participatory installation/game, that helped and fed the group with some concrete ideas, both on the vision and objective of the pilot and on the use and selection of specific materials.

The purpose of Corridors was to get to know the protagonists of the stories, through concrete corridors that lead to the realization of their dreams, personally experiencing how the same path, even the apparently more linear ones, can be conditioned by each one's identity, origins, economic, social and cultural resources, etc. and may, in some cases, lead nowhere and/or at the same time be a place to live/experience rather than just to pass through, in which to meet people and not just come across them, creating relationships that can condition each persons' paths.

The personal stories gathered through qualitative interviews touch on very 'emotional' and universal themes, that can count and be traced beyond the single and personal stories, although are rooted in them such as: departure, home, loneliness, disorientation, relationships, dreams.

The realisation of this experiential and participatory installation, a 'game-non game, that was titled CORRIDORS, represents the concrete best practice of the entire EMPATHY project from Fondazione Empatia's point of view: CORRIDORS can be easily reproduced, it can speak about the project in future representations, and can concretely speak to the heart of participants through their participation.

**CORRIDOI was launched in the two universities in Milano in November 2022: Università Milano-Bicocca and Università Statale di Milano.**

## 8. Campaigning

### Introduction and Best practices

During the international academy, that took place in Milan, Italy, from 6 to 10 July 2022 and involved around 40 AoCs and project partners as well as experts, various workshops were carried-out on campaign, which equipped the young participants with the knowledge on the typical campaign activity, leading to the development of eight concepts in different forms (video, oral message, explanation of exhibitions and demonstrations, images).

To further deepen and practically implement the knowledge of campaign methods and procedures realized, follow-up sessions were carried-out by another expert, Klaus Meyenberg, Senior campaign manager in the direct marketing department of the Deutsche Bahn in Frankfurt, who engaged the AoCs in a training constituted by 2 workshops. This further boosted the competence of the Agents of Change on the topic of campaigning which will be implemented in the empathy project. The young participants – Agents of Change – are active on various social media channels and will use these to implement their actions.

### Lessons learnt

**1. CONTEXT:** The realisation of sensibilization campaigns by AoCs was foreseen in the project proposal and, after the International Academy in July 2022, it was asked about their willingness to participate in the finalisation of the campaigns to be launched transnationally. **We received 12 expressions of interest out of 40 AoCs asking for a commitment of 6 hours between September and October.**

Workshop n.1, the first call, went desert. This appointment was defined based on the preferences declared by each AoC in a doodle that did not have much success.

Workshop n.1, the second call, had 6 AoC participants (50%).

Workshop n. 2, had 5 AoC participants.

Workshop n.3, a unique call, went desert.



### Lessons Learnt from participants

- Reduce the temporal distance between 2 connected activities - in this case, the International Academy and the activity on campaigning - to reduce the risk of low participation. The Summer break hinders the participation and motivation of participants.
- Periodic face-to-face or online meetings between Agents of change and the local partner could have energized and motivated them.



- The email could not be the best way to communicate with Youths from 18 to 25 years old because almost no one answered emails. Decide with them the most useful communication tool.

**2. CONTEXT:** The first 2 workshops were theoretical and the last one went desert. The AoCs were not sufficiently engaged and motivated during the training.

### Lessons Learnt from the training

- Try to stimulate AoCs during the theoretical session.
- Adapt the content of the workshop to the specific auditors/learners.
- Use more examples to explain the theory. Learning from concrete campaigns' examples.

**3. CONTEXT:** The project partners were in charge of selecting the AoCs interested in joining the activity on campaigning, while Pro Arbeit found the expert for the workshops and Project School managed the activity.

One representative from Babelia, Pro Arbeit and Project School was present at each workshop and after that, slides and minutes meeting were shared with all AoC who shared their interest in joining the activity. The third workshop was never replicated and Project School waited for a reply from partners for about 15 days before concluding that the partners will have concluded the activity locally instead of transnationally.

### Lessons Learnt from the project partners

- If project partners are not proactive there is the risk of activity failure.
- Establish from the beginning a deadline for the partner who proposes a question must have a reply.
- Before starting an activity that involves the AoCs (or participants in general) communication should be guaranteed between them. Check the frequency and appropriateness of the communication channel used with participants.
- Solicit participants and ask for clarifications if they appear not interested in the activity. Within the project establish contacts with participants that should have clarified that being part of the project requires responsibility, accountability and respect for the work of others.

## 9. External Advisory Board experiences and recommendations

The external advisory board represents the project's technical support and validation body, in charge of supporting partners and local agents of change to implement the integration capacity building programme and to deliver the local communities' engagement strategies (inclusion programme). It was formed by an average of eight experts (two per each target country) chosen for their expertise on the knowledge pillars of the capacity building programme and their experience in delivering engagement actions towards diverse groups and communities.

For all experts, it was overall a positive experience both personally and professionally, some of the experts were driven by the motivation of working with young people and, over time, their motivation increased due to the level of participation witnessed from the young participants, project staff and partners during international meetings. Indeed, one expert acknowledged that "their input into the meetings and discussions has always been eye opening. During the project they have managed to act not in a team, but as a team overcoming any cultural differences". In this sense "the best practice of empathy is to create a bridge, the communication between young people, who first of all need support, support from people who understand them, feel them, who helps them to develop their personality".

Another expert shared that "the Empathy Project has been a good structured and thought Project. I felt involved and most important, to have a voice to share opinions and ideas" showing the ownership over the project strategy and activities aimed at "intercultural dialogue, with the objective of lowering and even eradicating prejudices, intolerance and discrimination in the EU, and contributing to better inclusion in economy and society" as seen by a board member while another highlighted that "activities like that help a lot to migrants with study, work and make new acquaintances with local youth".

In terms of area of improvement we gathered the following recommendations:

- "From a technological point of view, hybrid events can be improved in terms of sound and image quality that affected the interaction";
- "I will suggest more informal activities such as trips, excursions, etc with the young participants, especially at the orientation stage to promote more social contacts, broaden their networks and perspectives. Of course this will require more budget allocation but I consider this to be important because of its tendency to motivate young people and develop their commitment";
- "I believe that more meetings at the international level would have been beneficial for participants in sharing experiences and developing a consistent Empathy approach. The cohesion level would have been higher. However, the COVID restrictions have affected these type of meetings, at least in the first year of the project."
- "The idea was maybe difficult to transmit in its fullness, all of those that participated in the international meeting said that participating in these really clarified it, so maybe increasing the participation in the early stages could help. Sometimes also the deadlines where not completely clear and also having no boundaries about what could be done gives you blank page fright.

- "I would suggest improvements in the advisory board. Regular meetings and exchanges would have been better. The one hour during the conferences and at the end of conferences was a bit stressful..I would also suggest more time planned for Workshops at the final conference. One hour was way too little. People had questions and critical remarks that couldn't be addressed due to time. I found it a pity that due to the time factor triggers and emotions could not be dealt with."

At the same time, also the positive aspects were accounted for, for instance these points were particularly appreciated:

- The variety of people involved and diversity of workshops.
- The project managed to raise awareness for a fundamental concept of modern times: Empathy. We always expect empathy from others, but we fail to manifest it ourselves. In this globalized world where people move more freely and cultural differences are much more visible, in spite of the tendency towards uniformization, empathy becomes a key resource for any individual. Participants in the project understood this and developed empathy skills that will help them overcome any future challenges.
- It was really interesting the work on exploring the concept of empathy, what it really means, and since we tried to get to the core of it, you could see the connection between the four different projects, while being completely different. We also had some useful capacity building about social projects that will be really useful in the future.
- Regarding the Italian project, while developing the idea we really dwelled in analyzing every aspect, meaning, issue.
- Networking, bringing the agents of change together from the various projects and also the close involvement and accompaniment of the young agent of change during the different stages.

These remarks are of pivotal importance for the upscaling of the project at local level and its continuation as well as suggestions for future projects and organisations that wish to address similar topics and/or target groups.

## 10. Conclusions

This toolkit is based on best practices and examples of youth participation and youth empowerment activities in the Empathy project as was implemented in Germany, Spain, Romania and Italy from January 2021-January 2023.

Since the socio-political dynamics of the world will still persist, so are the challenges that emanate from racism and discrimination among others. The active empowerment and participation of young people to combat these challenges will significantly contribute to at least reducing these challenges, their effects they pose to societies and changing perspectives to mitigate against these effects.

Youth Social and civic empowerment activities should be promoted to encourage youth activism and participation in societal processes.